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# Family Guide

**to physical activity for youth**

**10-14 years of age**

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**Everyday It's Fun  
and Healthy Too!**

*At home*

*At school*

*Inside or outside*

*On the way to and from school*

*With family and friends*



Health  
Canada

Santé  
Canada



The College  
of Family  
Physicians  
of Canada



Canadian Society for  
Exercise Physiology

# Physical inactivity and youth: the health link

Over half of Canada's youth are not active enough for healthy growth and development. We must teach youth about physical activity and their health and encourage them to do more.

Today, most youth know about *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*, they understand that smoking is bad for their health, and they take an active interest in the environment. It's time to make physical activity a priority too. The health of Canada's youth depends on it!

Additional evidence suggests that a lack of physical activity is dangerous to their health and can be a major contributor to weight gain and obesity. From 1981 to 1996 the prevalence of obesity tripled in both boys and girls.

It is important to develop physical activity habits in the younger years, because the health risks of inactivity in adulthood are severe.

They include:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Obesity
- Adult-onset diabetes
- Osteoporosis
- Depression
- Colon Cancer
- Premature death



# New guidelines promote physically active lifestyle

Canada's *Physical Activity Guide for Youth* says that youth need to increase their physical activity by a total of at least 30 minutes a day to start. This can be done in short 5-10 minute bouts, adding up to 30 minutes. They also need to reduce TV and computer time by at least 30 minutes a day. They recommend gradually over a period of five months to increase physical activity by at least 90 minutes a day and reduce non-active pursuits like TV, computers and video games by the same amount of time.

## An increase of 30 minutes is just the start

The *Guide* suggests that youth review their activity patterns every month and progressively increase their efforts. Once they have reached the first month's goal, they need to reset the goal to include more time and activities that are more challenging for the next month.

For parents the biggest challenge may be to reduce the amount of time youth spend watching TV, on the computer or playing video games. There are lots of ideas included here to help you accomplish this.

## A partnership for health

Health Canada, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, provincial partners and key children and youth organizations have worked together to produce a set of *Guide* support resources to help get children and youth moving. These resources have been developed to help you and your children understand the importance of physical activity and how it affects their body and health.

The resources include:

- this booklet for families and caregivers
- a *Let's Get Active Magazine for Youth*
- a *Teacher's Guide*

These have all been designed to help increase physical activity in youth up to the age of 14. There is a similar set of materials for children age 6 to 9.

We need your support at home. We are encouraging parents and teachers to reinforce each other in these efforts to increase physical activity among children and youth.

# Let's Get Active



## Canada's Guidelines for Increasing Physical Activity in Youth

1. **Increase** the time **currently** spent on physical activity starting with at least 30 minutes **more** per day.
2. **Reduce** "non-active" time spent on TV, video, computer games and surfing the Internet, starting with at least 30 minutes **less** per day.

You need to encourage youth to build up their physical activity throughout the day in periods of at least 5 to 10 minutes.



### This increase in physical activity should include:

\*Moderate activities like brisk walking, skating, or bike riding and

\*\*Vigorous activities like running, supervised weight-training, basketball or soccer.



### Here's how it works!

MONTH	Daily INCREASE in moderate* activity (Minutes)		Daily INCREASE in vigorous** activity (Minutes)		Total Daily INCREASE in physical activity (Minutes)	Daily DECREASE in non-active time (Minutes)
Month 1	at least 20	+	10	=	30	30
Month 2	at least 30	+	15	=	45	45
Month 3	at least 40	+	20	=	60	60
Month 4	at least 50	+	25	=	75	75
Month 5	at least 60	+	30	=	90	90

**Note:** Youth who are already quite active should record all their moderate and vigorous activities for a few days. They can total up the minutes, then progress gradually from there until they reach at least 90 minutes of daily physical activity.

# Raising healthy youth

Youth love computers, video games and television. While these activities can be educational and contribute to mental development, youth need physical activity for healthy physical growth and development.

As parents, you can work with youth to encourage healthy behaviours by setting some physical activity ground rules. Encourage youth to play outside and try to be an active role model yourself. Usually, active parents have active kids. It's important to start physical activity early, as inactive kids can become inactive adults.

This *Family Guide* can help you understand that more activity is generally required and helps you identify ways to get youth to become more active.

Many youth participate in organized sports, play actively outside with friends, or regularly walk or cycle to school. Physical activity doesn't need to be highly structured to be beneficial.

If your children are not physically active, talk to your physician, a physical activity counsellor at your local recreation centre or 'Y', or one of the physical education teachers at their school about how to get them moving.

## Physical activity has wonderful benefits:

- Helps youth meet new friends
- Builds strong bones and strengthens muscles
- Maintains flexibility
- Achieves a healthy weight
- Promotes good posture and balance
- Improves fitness
- Strengthens the heart
- Improves physical self-esteem
- Increases relaxation
- Enhances healthy growth and development



# Ways to change behaviour

Research shows that these five steps work together to change behaviour and establish new lifestyles.

- 1 Develop Awareness:** Involve young people in the process. They will be far more motivated if they play a part in the decision-making. Help youth become aware of how much activity they do now and how inactive they may be. This is essential to the next step. Use the 'Check Out What You Are Doing Now' section in the *Let's Get Active Magazine*.
- 2 Set Goals:** Goal-setting helps youth check their own progress. It might be helpful to set some goals for the whole family. Encourage small steps. Strive for the goal, check the results to find out what is working and what is not, revise the goal if you need to and try again.
- 3 Give Feedback and Praise:** Talk about their physical activities everyday and praise and reward small steps.
- 4 Get Agreement on the Plan:** Talk often about the physical activity goals with the whole family to encourage youth to do what they said they would do.
- 5 Reward and Recognize Change:** Reinforce new behaviour and celebrate successes through rewards and recognition. Reward them for doing a little more physical activity each week. Then reward them for doing activities from all three groups: endurance, flexibility and strength. Next, choose rewards for vigorous activities.



## Making Goals Work

**Jim set a couple of new goals...**

1. Join the after-school swim club and train three days a week
2. Help his dad in the garden

**How things went...**

1. Jim got a friend to go along so he would have some company. Things went well for a week or so, then one day he missed practice because he forgot his bathing suit and towel and another day a group of friends enticed him to go to the video arcade so he missed practice again. His coach told him to always leave a bathing suit and towel in his locker so that would never be a reason to miss practice. The coach also encouraged him to join the “100km Challenge”, which had a swim club t-shirt as a reward. This helped him get to practice regularly and he was less tempted to go off with friends.
2. Helping his family in the garden wasn’t much fun at first. Jim was always thinking about what his friends were doing and what he was missing out on by not being with them, so he and his family made a plan. Everybody was busy and really needed help so they decided Jim would earn some money for his garden work. He also decided to tie the work into a science project. He studied and learned more about the soil, the kinds of plants that grow best where he lives and the different things you can do to keep a garden healthy. What started out as boring turned into a profitable and healthy adventure!



# Tracking progress

Use the *Progress Chart* on the next page to help youth move toward their goals.

It's as easy as 1, 2, 3...

- 1 Help youth to get two or three realistic **goals** individually or for the family and decide on the time frame for each goal (two weeks, one month etc.). Get them to write their goals down.
- 2 Have youth list some **action steps** they can take to reach each goal.
- 3 Have them record any **obstacles** that come in the way and figure out some solutions to overcome them.

When youth achieve a goal check  it off in the box at the bottom of the page and give them a big pat on the back!

**Note:** Make some photocopies of the *Progress Chart* for future use.



# Progress Chart

Record your Goals and Action Steps to help you reach them. Note obstacles you encounter and determine ways (solutions) for overcoming them.

Goals and Action Steps	Time Frame
<b>Goal #1</b> _____	_____
Action Steps	
1 _____	_____
2 _____	_____
3 _____	_____
<b>Goal #2</b> _____	_____
Action Steps	
1 _____	_____
2 _____	_____
3 _____	_____
<b>Goal #3</b> _____	_____
Action Steps	
1 _____	_____
2 _____	_____
3 _____	_____
<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____
5 _____	5 _____
6 _____	6 _____

Completed

Goal #1

Goal#2

Goal#3

# **Helping youth be active is fun for the whole family and friends**

**Here are some ways to offer encouragement...**

- Talk about physical activity as an important part of staying healthy
- Discuss the material in the *Magazine* with your kids
- Ask what physical activities they like to do
- Encourage youth to try new physical activities and be patient as they learn
- Help them complete some of the challenges in the *Magazine*
- Be a role model by being active yourself
- Encourage youth to be active outside
- Praise their physical activities – building confidence is critical to success
- Encourage youth to participate in sports and physical activities in school
- Enrol them in community physical activity programs
- Teach them the skills they need to be active, like jumping rope, throwing and hitting a ball, kicking a ball, running, dancing, skating

**Here are some things you can do together...**

- Go for a walk after supper and set goals that you can record
- Put on music and dance with them
- Build physical activity into their daily routine
- Get the kids to take the dog for a walk – build it into their routine
- Get them to help you carry in the groceries
- Set up a stair challenge for the family – everyone counts the number of stairs they climb every day trying to increase the number each week
- Go to the neighbourhood recreation centre and enrol your child in a program that interests them
- Go cycling with them and set a distance challenge for the whole family
- Borrow some basic equipment such as balls and bats, frisbees, bikes, in-line skates, ice skates and toboggans, and teach them how to use them
- Let youth help you rake leaves and make a game of it
- Have youth help with snow clearing
- Go skating, skiing, hiking, climbing or swimming with them
- Make sure they are registered for physical education at school
- Encourage them to participate in house league activities at school
- When you are asked for a drive suggest that they walk, run or bike instead

**Here are some things you can do to encourage and support physical activity in your community...**

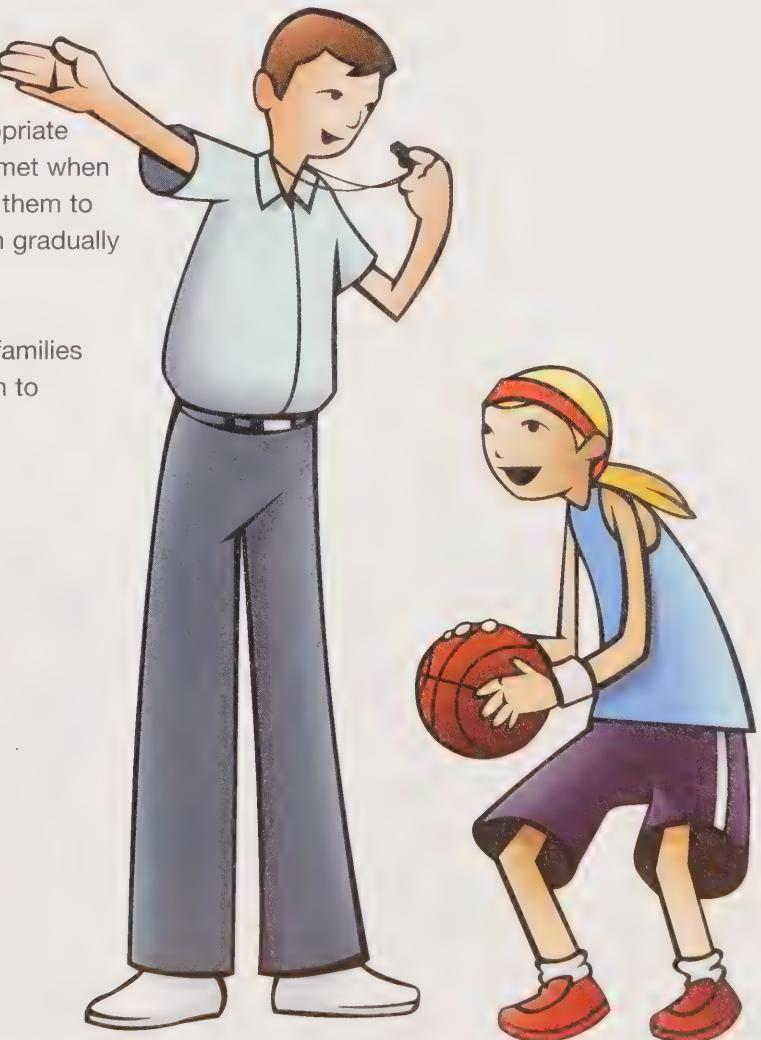
- Be a sport coach or organizer of physical activities in your community
- Advocate for more physical activity programs and facilities in schools and communities
- Advocate for increased safety in neighbourhoods, playgrounds, and parks and on the roads

In today's world, physical activity has to be built into busy schedules. This is true for you, but it is also true for youth.

### **Safety matters**

When youth are trying new activities and becoming more active, encourage them to be careful. Be sure they wear the appropriate protective equipment – for example, a helmet when cycling. For vigorous sports activities, get them to concentrate on learning the skills first then gradually increase the intensity.

Read on and find examples of how other families have used these steps to encourage youth to be more active.



# Here's how some families have tried to get started on the road to better health

## Single Dad Decides to Get Physically Active with his Kids

Geoff is a single parent who works full-time. By the time he gets home from work and has made supper, he is really tired. But, he loves to be active and he is determined to get his son and daughter, ages 10 and 12, off the couch and enjoying physical activity. The two children, Josh and Minna, love to play video games and surf the Net and are convinced that this is the best use of their precious free time.

Geoff called a family meeting. He had picked up a copy of *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth* at his local recreation centre and was determined to change things in their house. He sat down with the kids and went through the *Guide* with them. Josh and Minna complained that with school and homework, they barely had enough time to do what they wanted as it is.

Geoff decided to test out this theory. Every day for a week they each made a list of everything they did from morning to night. At the end of the week, he asked the kids to take an honest look at what they were doing. They discovered they were doing about 30 minutes of physical activity a day during recesses and lunch times. "We have to figure out how to increase that by at least 30 minutes," said Geoff. The children groaned.

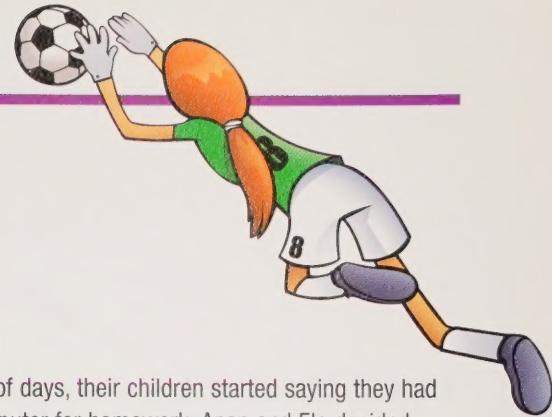
They needed the extra activity to be healthy and strong, so Geoff sat down with the children to set some family goals. It was agreed that they would do at least 30 minutes a day together as a family and they could choose the activities.

Everything went well for the first week and then each of them started to miss some days because of other activities. They sat down again and promised to improve. Some days they played ball and some days they walked to the store for groceries and other days they went to the park. On the weekends Minna had gymnastics and Josh played hockey and they cleaned the apartment together. If they needed more activity time they would choose something they could do together like cycling.

Each evening after supper the three of them would sit down and record their physical activities for the day. Discussing and doing physical activity became part of their daily routine. They all enjoyed doing more things together, and the children still had time for the computer and video games.

Once they had reached the first goal of increasing their physical activity by at least 30 minutes and were comfortable doing it, Geoff discussed a new goal with them. He used the Chart from page 4 of this *Family Guide* to show them the next step. Together they set a new goal.





## Ela and Anan's House Becomes an Activity Centre

Ela and Anan became concerned because their three children wanted to play with the computer and watch television any free moment they had. They would not go outside to play sports or other physical activities and their parents were convinced that their lifestyle was unhealthy.

Ela and Anan had high-speed Internet at their house so there were often lots of kids in their basement surfing the Net – and eating junk food. Their parents were not thrilled by any of it.

They heard on the news that health professionals had issued a Call to Action – “children and youth need to increase their physical activity from current levels by at least 30 minutes a day to stay healthy and reduce ‘non-active’ time by at least 30 minutes less a day.”

Ela and Anan decided to change what was going on in their own house. One evening, they looked up the Health Canada website and turned to *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth*. The kids went through the *Guide* with them and Anan turned off the computer. “Let's talk about this,” he said.

He asked the kids how much physical activity they were doing every day. The kids laughed and told them that everything was electronic these days and that physical activity was passé – old-timer stuff.

Anan and Ela made a decision. Their children had to increase their physical activity by at least 30 minutes a day if they wanted to continue to use the computer. The reward: surfing the Net. They could add up their physical activity time throughout the day in 5 to 10 minute periods, but they had to show they were working at it or there would be no Internet.

The kids were shocked but Anan and Ela were determined to change the behaviours of their own children and if their friends became part of it, that was fine with them. Anan set up a badminton net and a hockey net in the driveway to make it easy for them all to play.

After a couple of days, their children started saying they had to use the computer for homework. Anan and Ela decided the rule would stick – no computer for any reason until the physical activity goal was achieved and recorded on paper.

Both kids decided to walk to school and back instead of taking the bus. This gave them 10 minutes on the way to school and 10 minutes on the way back. Satisf signed up for gymnastics at school, Ashok signed up for house-league basketball, and Lauren played on a soccer team. These activities built up their activity levels. They got the other kids involved in badminton and ball hockey after school and soon all their friends were a lot more active, too.

Every day the kids had to do their physical activity before they could turn on the computer or the TV. Pretty soon it became a habit and on weekends they started taking their parents for bike rides and nature walks. They soon found they were active at least 90 minutes a day. They could do their physical activity and still “have a life.” As the months went by, it became easier and easier for them to set new goals and meet them.



## A Family Affair...

Summer was 10 when she brought home *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth*. Her teacher had told the class they needed to increase their physical activity by at least 30 minutes a day for good health. In fact, youth need at least 90 minutes a day of physical activity. Taking part in physical activity would be healthy for her caregiver, too.

Summer was determined that her family was going to be healthy and she sat down with her caregiver, Sandy, to work out a plan. First Sandy posted the *Guide* and the *Progress Chart* on the fridge and then she called a family meeting to talk about it. Summer's foster sister Chelsea, who was 14, was not interested. She was not very active and wanted no part of a family plan. But Sandy knew that they were not doing enough physical activity and thought Summer's plan was a good idea.

At first Chelsea would not participate, but when she saw Sandy doing things with Summer she decided to join in. They soon found they were having a hard time increasing their activity by 30 minutes a day. They needed some help. Summer's teacher suggested they visit the local recreation centre and see what the physical activity counsellor would suggest.

The counsellor sat down with them and helped them develop a general plan and come up with a good list of activities. They thought of a swim once a week in summer and winter, ice skating in the winter, family bike riding during the other seasons, and walks in the park. They also listed family soccer, playing catch, and even yard work. Summer and Chelsea also reminded Sandy that they would be taking physical education at school!

They set up a plan to get started, and recorded their activities on the *Progress Chart* (see page 9) that they had put on the fridge. Every 10 minutes of physical activity counted. After following the plan for a couple of weeks, they looked at the *Guide* again. They saw that it emphasized strength and flexibility activities as well as games and aerobic activities, so they set some new goals.

Sandy worked full-time along with raising the two children so she had a busy life. They were lucky, though, because her

company had a fitness centre. Sandy thought she could put her lunch hour to good use and take a class. This way it wouldn't interfere with their family time at home. Sandy signed up for yoga class and had a weight-training program set up for her which she could do three times a week. She was really happy about this because she enjoyed working out as a teenager but had let it go since she began fostering children.

To increase her activity even more, Sandy started getting off the bus a few stops early on the way to work and used the stairs regularly instead of an elevator. Not long after, Chelsea was joining Sandy for some supervised weight-training on Saturdays.

Thanks to Summer's prodding, the whole family gradually increased their physical activity by at least 90 minutes a day over a five-month period and they all felt better for it!

## Building New Habits...

Ning was overweight, unhappy and tired all the time. He was just 12 years old, but his doctor said he had to get active or it would have a real impact on his health now and as he got older. He was carrying around so much extra weight he'd get out of breath just climbing the stairs.

Ning and his family lived in a townhouse complex and there were lots of kids his age around, but he was reluctant to go outside and play because they made fun of him. All he wanted to do was watch TV and play video games.

One day, one of his teachers told Ning's mom about a special program for overweight kids that was going to be offered at the school. It would be a daily program to teach the kids about nutrition, get them started on a tailored, regular physical activity program and help to build their self-confidence.

Ning's mom was thrilled and talked to him about it that evening. Ning was hesitant, but agreed to give it a try. Ning and his mom went together to register. The counsellor explained the program to them and gave his mother some information about healthy meal preparation.

On the first day Ning wanted to go alone. His mom wanted to go and support him, but she let him make the decision. The first session was very easy. There were 10 kids in the group and all they had to do was walk. Ning was pleased that he could keep up with the others. After the walking, the counsellor talked to them about healthy eating and feeling good about themselves. Ning promised to attend the program after school every day.

At the end of a week, Ning was proud of himself. He had gone to the program every day and received his first certificate. His mom was proud of him as well. Soon he was asking his mom to follow the recipes that the counsellor had given them. The counsellor gave Ning a program for the weekend and his mom promised to help him. The weekend program included things like walking to the park or mall, playing ball and bending and stretching gently to help Ning be more flexible.

Ning began to make new friends in the group and he was a lot happier. He was no longer reluctant to be active and he was even offering to help out with the family chores. His progress was amazing. He gradually increased to 90 minutes a day of physical activity and he was spending less time watching television and playing video games. He started bringing home his new friends and they would play ball, hockey and basketball together outside.

Ning was very pleased with his progress and he was determined to keep going. Now that he had built up some confidence he joined a karate class. Each time he reaches a new goal, Ning posts it on the fridge and his mom and friends give him lots of praise. It is Ning who now reminds his mom about being active for their health!

### **Dad Was the Hockey Coach But...**

Jean-Pierre was an active guy who liked to play hockey and swim and ride his bike. He also coached little league hockey. His wife, Suranne, read a lot and was very inactive. They both worked full-time and were often tired by the end of the day. Their children, Louise and Sylvain, didn't much care for physical activity. Louise liked to read and Sylvain loved his video games.

Jean-Pierre wanted the kids to play hockey, but they couldn't skate very well and said they didn't want to do any sports. Jean-Pierre was sure the children needed to be more active. He also wanted his wife to be more active and hoped she might use her lunch hours for this. One day, he talked to another coach about the problem. The coach told him about *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth* and said they all needed to increase their physical activity levels by at least 30 minutes a day. Jean-Pierre called Health Canada's 1-888 number and ordered the *Canada Physical Activity Guides*, one for youth and one for adults and he also ordered the *Parent's Guide* and the *Let's Get Active Magazine for Youth*.

When the *Guides* arrived, Jean-Pierre called a family meeting. He told the children and Suranne that he wanted everyone to get more physically active. He said it is not healthy to sit around all the time. The body needs to move! The family agreed to give it a try. Jean-Pierre posted the physical activity *Guidelines* and the *Progress Chart* on the fridge. The family agreed they'd do one activity together every day and record what they did.

They had an ambitious plan. Some days the family would skate so the kids could improve their skating skills. Other days they would play in the park after supper, go for a walk, play ball, walk to Gramma's house, or go swimming at the local pool, and on the weekends they would do chores and shop for groceries. Suranne would start going for a fast walk on her lunch hours, too. This was a real challenge for everyone except Jean-Pierre.

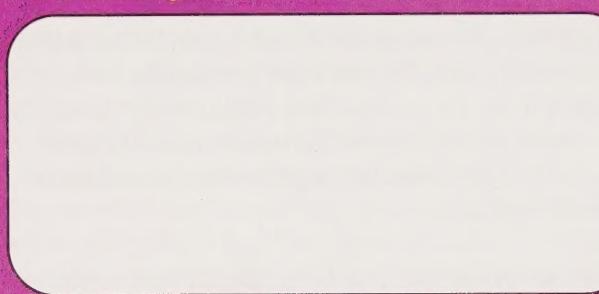
After two weeks, Jean-Pierre called another meeting. They had already missed several days of activities for a variety of reasons. They said they'd try and do better. Jean-Pierre had to keep prodding to get his children and his wife to be more active, but eventually it worked. Now the family makes physical activity a part of their daily routine. They review their activities often and set new goals for themselves on a regular basis. Louise and Sylvain have both joined the hockey league, which makes Jean-Pierre very proud of them. And, most amazing, Suranne is taking a beginner hockey-coaching course!

## Endorsers

The following organizations have endorsed *Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Youth and the support resources*.

- Active & Safe Routes to School
- Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability
- Arthritis Society
- Assembly of First Nations
- Association of Local Public Health Agencies
- Block Parent Program of Canada
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
- Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine
- Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women & Sport & Physical Activity
- Canadian Association for Young Children
- Canadian Association of Principals
- Canadian Child Care Federation
- Canadian Council on Social Development
- Canadian Diabetes Association
- Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute
- Canadian Home and School Federation
- Canadian Institute of Child Health
- Canadian Intramural Recreation Association
- Canadian Lung Association
- Canadian Medical Association
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Canadian Nurses Association
- Canadian Paediatric Society
- Canadian Parks and Recreation Association
- Canadian Physiotherapy Association
- Canadian Psychiatric Association
- Canadian Psychological Association
- Canadian Public Health Association
- Canadian School Boards Association
- Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology
- Canadian Special Olympics
- Canadian Teachers' Federation
- Children's Safety Association of Canada
- Child Welfare League of Canada
- Coalition for Active Living
- College of Family Physicians of Canada
- Dietitians of Canada
- Family Service Canada
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- Girl Guides of Canada – Guides du Canada
- Go for Green
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada
- Lifesaving Society
- National Crime Prevention Centre
- National Institute of Nutrition
- Osteoporosis Society of Canada
- Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada
- Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada
- Safe Kids Canada
- Scouts Canada
- United Way of Canada
- Victoria Order of Nurses for Canada
- Vanier Institute of the Family
- YMCA Canada
- YWCA Canada

## Distributed by...



## Provincial Children's Hospitals:

- Alberta Children's Hospital
- Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
- Children's & Women's Health Centre of British Columbia
- Hospital for Sick Children
- IWK Health Centre
- Janeway Children's Hospital
- Montreal Children's Hospital
- Stollery Children's Hospital
- Winnipeg Children's Hospital

## Active bodies need energy

Follow *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* to make wise food choices



[www.healthcanada.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.ca/foodguide)

## Healthy activity is safe activity



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Please use this *Family Guide* with additional *Guide* support resources.

For more information: Call **1-888-334-9769**

or visit [www.healthcanada.ca/paguide](http://www.healthcanada.ca/paguide)